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## **Istook Announces Federal Help for OK Meth Problem**

*Oklahoma City, OK--* Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK) announced today at a press conference in Oklahoma City that six Oklahoma counties have been designated as High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) and will be included in the work of the existing North Texas HIDTA. The designation means more federal drug enforcement funds for Oklahoma, \$250,000 in FY 2002 and more in following years. The HIDTA designation also increases coordination between local, state and federal law enforcement agencies through cooperative investigations, information/intelligence sharing and joint operations.

Surrounded by local, state, and national law enforcement officials, Istook announced that **Oklahoma, Tulsa, Cleveland, Comanche, Muskogee, and Sequoyah Counties** have received the HIDTA designation. Istook chairs the House Appropriations Subcommittee ("Treasury, Postal, and General Government") that oversees over \$2 billion in federal anti-drug spending. Istook used his position as subcommittee chairman to require the ONDCP (Office of National Drug Control Policy) to make an accelerated priority review of whether parts of Oklahoma should be included in a HIDTA. At his urging, the ONDCP, within three months, conducted a review and designation process that normally takes over a year.

The Office of National Drug Control Policy decided that because of Oklahoma's central location, it has national impact on drug trafficking and drug availability in other parts of the country, and therefore qualifies for the special HIDTA designation.

**"Meth labs and meth use are major problems in Oklahoma, and it's expensive to combat them,"** Istook said. **"This HIDTA designation gives Oklahoma significant new help to fight meth and other illegal drugs. I'm thrilled that we've got some help on the way for Oklahoma."**

The HIDTA designation means local and state law enforcement agencies can receive federal reimbursements for the following expenses for officers/agents working full-time in HIDTA funded initiatives and task forces:

- Specialized training
- Overtime for HIDTA-related activities
- Leasing costs for vehicles
- Payments for evidence and information in law enforcement investigations
- Specialized law enforcement equipment not normally provided by agencies
- Leasing fees, maintenance and other costs for facilities collocating multi-agency HIDTA-funded initiatives and task forces
- Investigative travel (and travel for training)

According to the Drug Enforcement Administration, only three other states have more clandestine meth lab seizures than Oklahoma. A state study also revealed that total methamphetamine use in Oklahoma was 42% higher than the national average and 80% higher among ages 26-34. Both studies were based on 1999 numbers.